

FEBRUARY 28, 1980

Starting the first of March, admittance to our bull pasture is going to either be by court order or federal search warrant. The world's cattle critics and bull judges are going to have to find themselves a new experiment station. I am going under a cloak of security that'll make the history of the Dark Ages look like M.G.M has the whole story on video tape.

By the time I finish the tale I'm sure you are going to agree with my measures. You see, we'd been working cattle at both places for several days. Doing things like spraying for ticks and lice and marking calves and sorting off the dries to separate pastures.

It certainly was not the kind of work that would bring back memories of Mr. Chisum, but for a drouth ravaged outfit squeezed by ice storms, I thought we were doing a good job.

Now, in the course of the work, we wound up penning one bunch of cattle in a small set of pens close to the county road- four-year-old cows, a bit less affected by the drouth because of their age and a slight difference in the amount of old grass in the pasture. I'd already turned a bull in the herd. This bull is one point of the story.

I'd noticed an old boy following us along in the county lane. I didn't know who he was, but I knew he was a herder from the way he kept looking at the cattle.

Granted, it wasn't a calendar scene. Two of us were on horseback in winter clothes; a feed wagon was tolling the cows up front. Nevertheless, I was pleased over the way some of the older cows looked and fully expected the stranger to stop to exchange pleasantries.

He stopped, right up against our fence. I had to dismount to hear above the noise of the cattle bawling. He said, "Noelke, I finally figured out why you turned that bull with those cows. You are going to beat the high gasoline prices by raising work oxen,"

All right, that's as far as you need to know of the story. I am not even going to tell you the real breed of the bull or the suspected breed of the hombre. In fact, if I had the money I'd build a rock fence down that lane and out up dark shades to hide our cattle from airplanes. I was so mad I had a terrible time getting back on my horse. My foot slipped three times and it's a wonder I didn't get a hernia from all the stress he caused.

Here we are in 1980 in an age that's being called "enlightenment and knowledge," "peace and love," hope and prosperity," and I can't own a big bull without a smart mouth coming down a near un-traveled road and ruining my day, my month, and the year.

So from now on the roadside cattle judges and the pickup mounted cow experts can keep on moving. The rights of private property are going to be taken to very limits of the sovereignty of the land. I am still going to serve coffee to visitors and maybe a little lunch. But the hospitality of the Shortgrass Country has taken a blow. Some folks will never learn how much better off they are staying home looking after their own bulls.